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Letter dated 9 March 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the attached letter dated 6 March 2012, from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, forwarding a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, covering the period from 1 November 2011 to 31 January 2012 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its attachment to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Please recycle

Annex

Letter dated 6 March 2012 from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1943 (2010), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from 1 November 2011 to 31 January 2012 (see enclosure). I would appreciate it if you would make this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Anders Fogh **Rasmussen**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the Security Council on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. This report, pursuant to the request in Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1943 (2010), informs the United Nations on the progress of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), covering the period from 1 November 2011 to 31 January 2012. As at 9 January 2012, total ISAF strength stood at 130,236 personnel provided by all 28 NATO countries and 22 non-NATO countries. Bahrain became the fiftieth ISAF troop-contributing country and operational partner to ISAF in December 2011. NATO and ISAF reiterate their invitation to additional United Nations Members to support this United Nations-mandated mission by providing advisers and trainers for the Afghan National Security Forces as well as increasing their support for the civilian sectors of governance and development.

2. Throughout the reporting period, ISAF continued to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. From 1 November 2011 to 31 January 2012, ISAF suffered 1,432 casualties, including 76 killed in action, 876 wounded in action and 11 non-battle-related deaths.

3. During this reporting period, enemy-initiated attacks continued to trend downwards and the nationwide change was 9 per cent lower in 2011 when compared to 2010. However, in the eastern part of the country, the enemy-initiated attacks increased, owing primarily to deliberate operations of ISAF and the Afghan security forces to push the insurgency further beyond the population centres. The operational effectiveness of the Afghan security forces improved from the previous quarter and is advancing at a pace acceptable to sustain transition. The number of partnered and Afghan-led operations continued to increase, with the Afghan security forces becoming more capable of conducting security operations across the country. According to the recent Asia Foundation survey, the Afghan public is becoming increasingly confident in the ability of its forces to provide for its security. The security incidents this quarter were marked by the suicide attacks in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif on 6 December 2011, which caused a large number of civilian casualties by targeting Shia Muslims commemorating the holiday of Ashura.

4. Additional noteworthy events for this reporting period:

(a) From 16 to 19 November, the consultative Loya Jirga was conducted in Kabul. The Afghan National Security Forces successfully managed the security arrangements with minimal support from ISAF. In the opening speech, President Karzai underlined the necessity of continued international military and economic support beyond 2014, while also asserting Afghan sovereignty.

(b) On 26 November, while conducting clearance of a suspected insurgent training camp close to the Pakistan border, ISAF and Afghan security forces units came under fire from the overlooking ridgeline in Pakistan. Owing to a series of miscommunications, Pakistani military positions were mistakenly engaged by ISAF close air support. The incident resulted in the destruction of two border posts, and 26 Pakistani soldiers were killed in action. As a result of the close border incident, a

series of prevention and mitigation measures have been put in place to prevent a similar incident from occurring. Pakistan authorities have since closed the border crossing points for ISAF logistical transports.

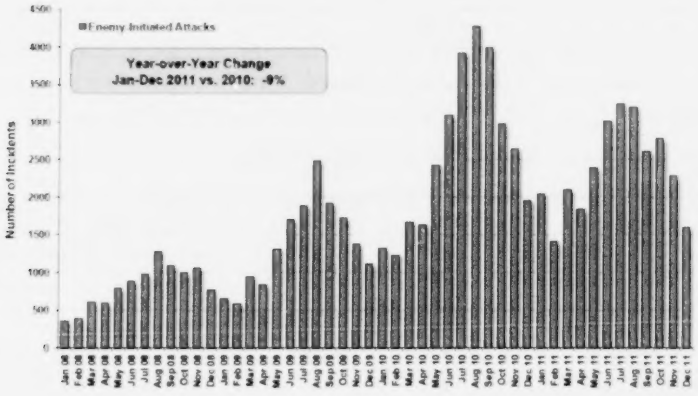
(c) On 27 November, the second tranche of areas to enter transition was announced by President Karzai. The second tranche comprises a further 18 areas. Implementation of the second tranche began in Parwan Province on 1 December 2011 and is now under way in all tranche 2 areas, except for Sari Pul Province (Regional Command North), which has been postponed.

(d) On 5 January, President Karzai ordered the Constitutional Oversight Commission to complete the transfer of the United States-run detention facility in Parwan to Afghan authorities within a month. The President's decision came after the Commission reported violations of the Afghan Constitution, which provides that no foreign countries can maintain and run prisons in Afghanistan, as well as of the Afghan Criminal Code. In February 2012, President Karzai extended the timeline to 9 March 2012.

(e) On 20 January, soldiers from a French operational mentoring and liaison team in Regional Command East, Kapisa Province, were engaged by an Afghan National Army soldier, resulting in 4 ISAF soldiers killed in action and 14 wounded in action (all casualties French). ISAF troop-contributing countries have expressed strong concerns about the loss of life and consequences of the incidents that have involved Afghan security forces personnel attacking ISAF troops, and have asked the Afghan authorities to improve their screening and vetting of recruits.

Security situation

5. Enemy-initiated attacks[a] have declined when compared to the same quarter of 2010/11. Insurgent efforts to maintain operations into the winter with high-profile attacks and assassinations have been largely ineffective. The insurgency failed to achieve this objective, owing to a combination of persistent Afghan and ISAF conventional and special forces operations, ongoing clear, hold and build operations, reintegration efforts, and the expansion of local defence initiatives.

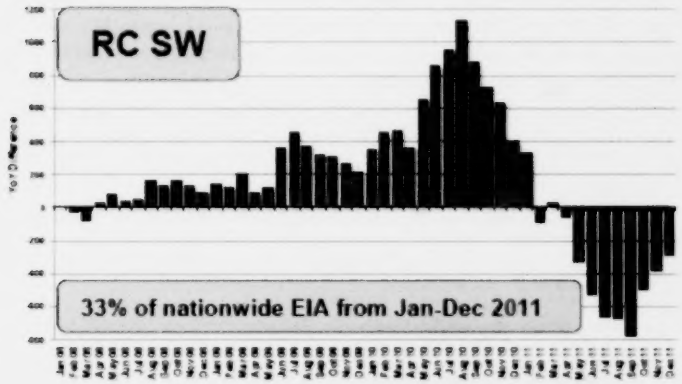


[a] Enemy-initiated attacks comprise enemy action (enemy-initiated direct fire, indirect fire, surface-to-air fire) and explosive hazard events, including executed attacks only (improvised explosive device explosions/mine strikes).

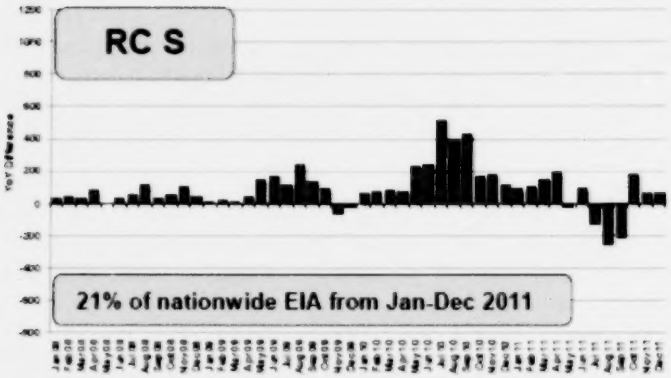
6. Insurgents continue to rely on improvised explosive devices as the principal means to execute their campaign. During the reporting period, the insurgency was accountable for 84 per cent of civilian casualties, of which 60 per cent were caused by the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices. More than half of the improvised explosive devices and mines were found and cleared rather than detonated.

7. Regionally, the security situation is as follows:

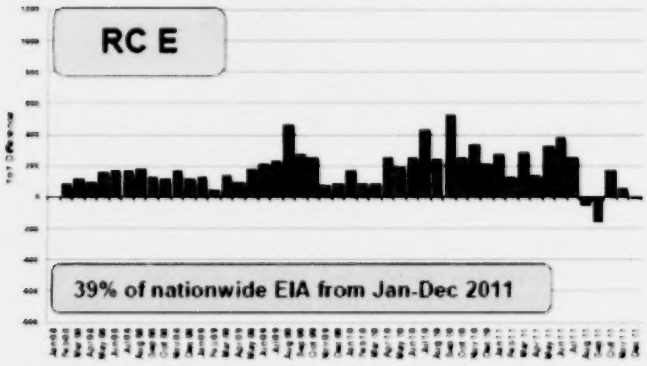
(a) **Regional Command Southwest.** In Regional Command Southwest, enemy-initiated attacks in 2011 were 29 per cent lower than in 2010. Deliberate combined team operations maintained pressure on insurgents during the beginning of the winter season, which helped to reduce insurgent capacity. Improved governance from the Provincial Governor, Gulab Mangal, and combined team efforts have strengthened and expanded the security bubble centred on Lashkar Gah. Operations continue in northern and southern Helmand to disrupt insurgent strongholds. The small ISAF force reductions during the final quarter of 2011 have not affected operations, but future significant reductions may well test the capabilities of the Afghan security forces, who to date have performed well.



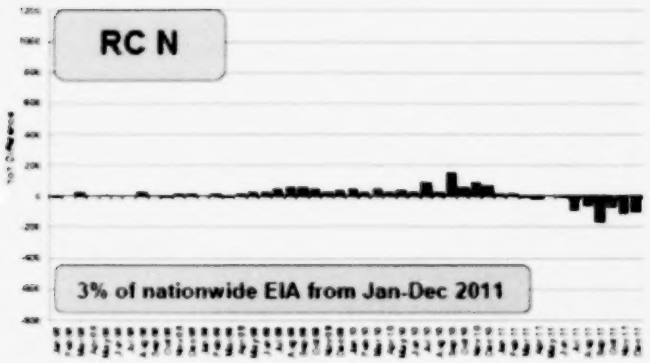
(b) **Regional Command South.** The improving capability of the Afghan security forces and the success of combined team operations maintained pressure on insurgents and limited their ability to operate. A small increase in the number of security incidents during the reporting period and recent resurgence in suicide attacks in the Kandahar area reiterates the importance of the south to the insurgency. Insurgents increasingly targeted Afghan security forces and Government officials in an effort to regain influence over the population.



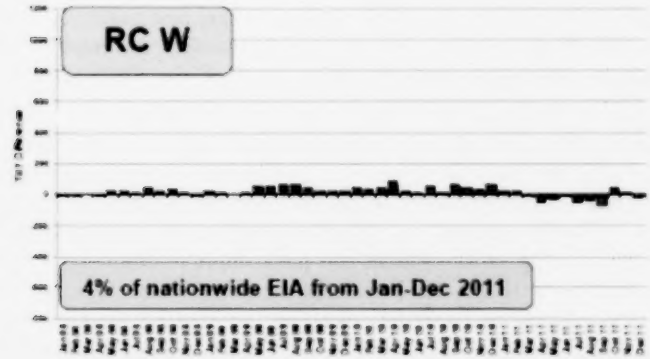
(c) **Regional Command East.** Security incidents in Regional Command East have followed a general winter decline, but persisted at higher levels than previously seen and are spread across the Regional Command because of a geographically diverse enemy. Supplies and fighters originating in Pakistan and moving across the border have enabled the insurgents in the region to maintain their operational capability and tempo. Increased pressure from ISAF and the Afghan security forces, coupled with Afghan local security initiatives, are working to disrupt these supply routes and therefore hamper insurgent operations. Strained relations during the reporting period between ISAF/Government of Afghanistan and Pakistan underline the importance of cooperation for security and stability in the border region.



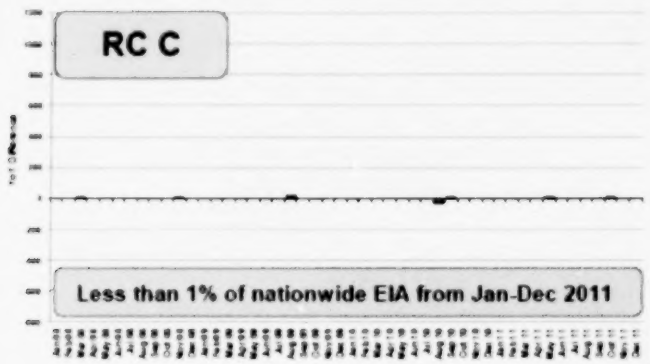
(d) **Regional Command North.** Insurgent networks in the north still represent a threat to combined team forces and the Government of Afghanistan, but to a smaller degree than in the other Regional Commands. Actual numbers of security incidents decreased during the last quarter, demonstrating the insurgents' inability to transform their rhetoric into actions. Though a positive attitude towards security forces has been reported among the populace, corruption within those representing the Government remains of great concern.



(e) **Regional Command West.** The success of combined team operations and improved popular support towards both the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF have resulted in an overall decrease in the number of security incidents. These contributing factors have resulted in the degradation of both the morale and capabilities of the insurgents in Regional Command West. Enemy-initiated attacks have remained largely uncoordinated, ineffective and will likely decrease throughout the winter until the 2012 fighting season begins.



(f) **Regional Command Capital.** The improved capabilities of the Afghan security forces, significant cache finds, the expansion of the Kabul security zone and coalition forces operations in Regional Command East have limited the effectiveness of insurgent activities in the capital, culminating in a virtual lack of insurgent kinetic activity in January 2012. Although security incidents are most likely to remain stable in the next quarter, insurgents will intermittently attempt to challenge the perception of security in Kabul Province as a kinetic incident in the capital is likely to garner significant media attention.



Afghan National Security Forces

8. The development of the Afghan National Security Forces is on track in terms of both size and quality. The forces are on a glide path to meet the strength goals of October 2012, while command and control capacities continue to be built up and improved. One of the main efforts of ISAF is towards further professionalization of the forces. Substantial progress in reliability and sustainability of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police has been achieved.

9. In 2011, the Afghan security forces added 57,000 soldiers and police to their numbers. Currently, almost 40 per cent of conventional and special forces operations are led by Afghan forces, and approximately 90 per cent of the operations are partnered with ISAF.

10. Strong recruitment has allowed the Afghan forces to remain on track towards the next strength target of 352,000 by October 2012. In addition to growing combat forces, the Afghan security ministries made substantial progress in increasing the quality of their forces. With the support and advice of the Coalition, the Afghan security force units are becoming more capable and have improved their ability to conduct autonomous operations in the field. Efforts are being made to establish proficient headquarters at national and regional levels and to improve planning and coordination capacity. In addition, the Afghan forces are progressively assuming more responsibility for self-training.

11. The establishment of training institutions is close to completion and fosters the progressive professionalization of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. The development of the security forces continues to focus on five key areas: training Afghan trainers and instructors; accelerating leader development; building literacy and vocational skills; inculcating an ethos of stewardship; and developing enduring institutions, systems and enablers. Additional trainers and advisers from the international community are still required to accelerate professionalization further and help to create effective and sustainable Afghan security forces. Furthermore, ISAF and the Government of Afghanistan are now reinforcing the vetting process for the security forces to improve safety for ISAF embedded personnel and prevent a deterioration of confidence between international trainers and advisers and their Afghan counterparts.

Afghan National Army

12. The Afghan National Army currently constitutes the most robust and self-sufficient organization in the Afghan security forces. The Afghan Army has entered the last fielding phase, the goal of which is to reinforce the sustainability of a more balanced professional force able to assume the security lead. To this end, combat support and combat service support units, along with corps and brigade troops[b] are being created and trained. Fielding of these new enabling units should be completed by the end of 2013. Furthermore, a more autonomous logistics branch continues to be developed. Finally, significant efforts are being made to finalize the establishment of a complete training institution allowing the Afghans to professionalize the force by themselves. An Afghan Army training command was set up to this end and 12 army branch schools permanently work at full capacity with more than 20,000 trainees. The overall training level for the army is increasing slowly but steadily.

13. The Afghan National Army remains on track to achieve its growth target of 195,000 by October 2012. Its current strength is around 184,000 soldiers. Army recruiting remains strong and ethnically balanced, and gender equity is permanently promoted by ISAF through the NATO Training Mission — Afghanistan.[c] The percentage of all Afghan Army kandaks (battalions) rated "effective with advisers" or higher increased to 44 per cent during this reporting period. As mentioned in the previous reports, the attrition rates are decreasing slowly but remain high and continue to generate additional recruitment and training costs. A comprehensive plan, including midterm and long-term solutions, has been developed in partnership with Afghan leaders to address this persistent issue.

14. Regarding the fielded Afghan Army, the issues to be solved remain leadership skills, high attrition, staff planning, tactical coordination and logistics.

Afghan Air Force

15. The development of the Afghan Air Force is under way and, in addition to the personnel recruitment and professionalization highlighted in the previous reports, infrastructure building has made significant process. New facilities have been delivered in support of a self-sustaining force. Important investments are foreseen to improve Air Force training sites and infrastructure, which are critical conditions for sound development and self-sustainability. The Afghan Air Force still faces some major challenges, with an important corruption level and recruiting issues, in particular in the ability to obtain qualified recruits.

16. Afghan Air Force strength reached 5,172 personnel in December 2011 and the attrition rates are lower than in the Army and national police. A total of 82 aircraft are in service within the Air Force, including 42 helicopters, and there are plans to reach up to 145 aircraft in total when the Air Force is fully fielded in 2016. International support remains critical for Air Force development, training and support to autonomously led Afghan security force operations.

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[b] Military police companies, military intelligence units, engineer battalions, signal battalions, route clearance companies, and mobile strike force battalions.

[c] There are currently 333 women serving in the Afghan National Army, nearly all of them in Kabul.

Afghan National Police

17. Overall, the Afghan National Police is currently on track for the October 2012 target. Its current strength is around 144,000 police officers. Authorized manning for both Afghan uniformed police and Afghan Border Police patrolmen is full; recruiting has been adjusted to focus on recruiting direct entry non-commissioned officers and to balance growth with training of non-commissioned officers and new patrolmen. The focus on training continues as the training seat capacity surpassed 15,000 and the training fill rate stood at around 65 per cent.

18. The personnel establishment for 2011 provides over 1,500 additional female billets. There are currently 1,244 women serving in the Afghan National Police. The recruitment of women is lagging behind for a variety of reasons, mainly commanders' reluctance to accept female officers.

19. The operational effectiveness of the Afghan National Police showed remarkable progress within the force. The report of December 2011 is the first one in which any police units were rated "independent with advisers". For the uniformed police, 40 per cent of units were rated "effective with advisers" or higher, while for the Afghan Border Police and the Afghan Civil Order Police, the rates were 53 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively.

Institutional capacity

20. The security ministries, with the assistance of the NATO Training Mission, are sustaining their continuous effort to build capability to generate and sustain the Afghan security forces. The Ministry of Defence and the General Staff still require assistance to accomplish their mission. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Defence confirmed an improved capability at the managerial level as demonstrated by the effective management of the initiation of transition tranche 2.

21. The Ministry of the Interior still requires significant assistance and is expected to progress to requiring only some assistance by the end of 2012. Key issues remaining include shortcomings in filling civilian positions because of the lack of civil service pay and grade reform.

Private security companies/Afghan Public Protection Force

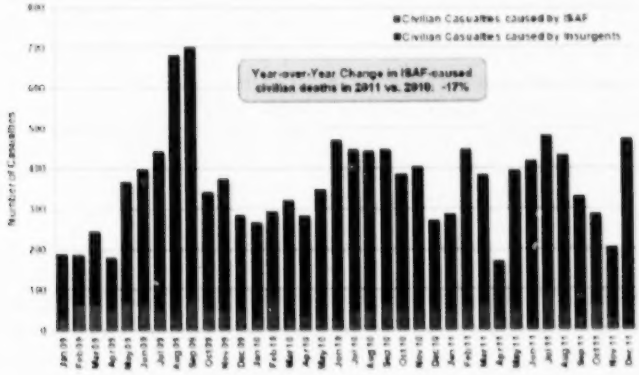
22. Nine months after the signature of the bridging strategy (March 2011), the Afghan Public Protection Force remains largely non-existent. The strategy calls for the dissolution of private security companies conducting development and convoy protection by 20 March 2012 and those conducting protection of ISAF bases and construction by 20 March 2013. The Joint Programme Executive Office has been established to support the transition from private security companies and to mentor the Public Protection Force, building adequate capability to support the bridging strategy. The Office could thus encourage development implementing partners to take the decision to continue development and infrastructure works. In order to accelerate the development of a business capability, command and control structure, and guard training capacity, several private security companies are mutating into risk management companies as a stopgap solution. The risk management companies will assist with management, oversight, training and operational standards until the Public Protection Force is fully capable of managing security operations. Assistance from the ministerial partners of the Public Protection Force (timely issuing of visas

by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, work permits from the Ministry of Labour, communication licences from the Ministry of Communication, armoured vehicle licences from the Ministry of the Interior to ensure no gap in security) is still critical to achieve President Karzai's deadline.

Civilian casualties

23. The protection of the Afghan population remains the highest priority for ISAF and every civilian casualty is detrimental to the ISAF mission. Among several initiatives, ISAF has dedicated special attention to the understanding and prevention of events that could result in civilian casualties. New tactical directives were issued this quarter and the entire ISAF force was retrained on them. The ISAF Deputy Commander became Chair of a new ISAF Civilian Casualties Avoidance and Mitigation Board to provide constant senior staff oversight of this issue. The Commander of ISAF held a conference at ISAF headquarters on 17 and 18 January 2012, in order to gather lessons learned from NATO operations in Libya, synchronize commanders' understanding of the ISAF Commander's Tactical Directive (Rev.4), and evolve future air support to partnered and non-partnered Afghan National Security Force units from a combat aviator's perspective.

24. Reporting this quarter indicates that the insurgents are responsible for 84 per cent of overall incidents relating to civilian casualties, which represents an increase of 7 per cent. The total number of civilian casualties is down by 19 per cent when compared to the previous reporting period. ISAF actions were attributed to only 6 per cent of all civilian casualty-related incidents, which is representative of the continued decreasing trend when compared to previous reports. December 2011 represents the lowest number of ISAF-caused civilian casualties since accurate record-keeping began in January 2009. It remains very apparent that the insurgency can still exploit and manipulate civilian casualty events to their advantage, since ISAF is perceived by the Afghan population to be accountable for all incidents where casualties occur. The figures reported in the chart reflect incidents of conflict-related civilian casualties (deaths and wounded) that have been confirmed through investigation to have been caused by either ISAF or insurgents. The data reported here is consistent with ISAF policy, which directs that all credible allegations of civilian casualties be reviewed.


Civilian Casualties caused by ISAF
Civilian Casualties caused by Insurgents
Year-over-Year Change in ISAF-caused civilian deaths in 2011 vs. 2010: -17%
Number of Casualties

Counter-narcotics

25. Afghan security forces, with the support of their ISAF partners, seized a record amount of narcotics and precursor chemicals in 2011, especially morphine, well in excess of the total seized in 2010. While disruption to the trade is significant, operations are not having a long-term impact on narcotics networks, as they are able to adapt and move, returning to pre-operational levels of activities once operations are complete.

26. Initial indications show opium cultivation decreasing in areas of better security. Near-record high opium prices drove farmers to plant poppy in large numbers, including in new areas where cultivation had previously been financially prohibitive. Cultivation has also migrated to more remote areas with limited security and small Coalition footprints as a result of successful operations in 2011.

27. Programmes to prepare Afghan security forces and improve capabilities at all levels are vital to ensure that Afghanistan is able to sustain counter-narcotics operations post-transition. ISAF will continue to provide support to Government counter-narcotics programmes and operations in order to disrupt, neutralize and influence the narcotics industry and its funding of the insurgency in Afghanistan. ISAF will continue to synchronize operations to the poppy cultivation cycle, in order to maximize disruptive effects and further support this aim.

Governance

28. ISAF continues to provide support to Afghan-led governance efforts, particularly in key areas of transition, reintegration, counter-corruption and rule of law improvement.

Transition

29. The implementation of tranche 2 is now under way. The Government continued to work jointly with NATO on the implementation of tranche 1 and 2 areas of transition as well as the planning for tranche 3. With tranche 2 now started, roughly 50 per cent of the Afghan population is in an area where security has been shifted to Afghan lead. ISAF continues to support the Afghan security forces in transition areas through various levels of oversight, training and provision of key enabler capabilities. The Joint Afghan-NATO *Inteqal* Board (JANIB) has endorsed the security, governance and development, strategic communication, and Provincial Reconstruction Team evolution components of all the transition implementation plans for tranche 2 areas. Transition ceremonies, organized and led by the Transition Coordination Commission, are now under way in all tranche 2 areas, except for Sari Pul Province in Regional Command North, which has been postponed. Transition implementation will be held off until Afghan processes have time to resolve the issues. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Anti-corruption

30. A NATO building integrity training team visited Kabul from 2 to 15 December. The team delivered a defence leadership in building integrity course to 45 students at the Afghan Police College followed by a building integrity train the trainers course for 12 students at the National Military Academy. The team then mentored Afghan trainers as they delivered a defence leadership in building integrity course to

35 students at the National Military Academy. This is the first time that Afghan trainers have delivered building integrity training and is a significant milestone in the implementation of the programme. With Task Force Shafafiyat (transparency), ISAF has been supporting Government efforts to reduce corruption in the government.

31. The NATO Public Affairs Conference on Afghanistan was held in Dubai on 10 December 2011. Around 100 spokespersons and press officers from NATO, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the European Union and ISAF headquarters and key Afghan Government spokespersons and media representatives attended the Conference. In addition, the Afghan Government Media and Information Centre undertook to host a workshop in Kabul for communicators in the capital to further explore ways of increasing the Afghan voice in all communications.

Support to rule of law development

32. Through the NATO Rule of Law Field Support Mission, ISAF is providing liaison and field capabilities to assist the Government and international civilian experts in improving capacity. The Support Mission focuses its efforts on helping the Government to expand rule of law outreach into key provinces and districts.

Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme

33. Afghan-led reconciliation and reintegration efforts met with mixed success over the past few months. Reintegration continued to show steady incremental progress as small groups of Taliban entered the process over the quarter, particularly in Regional Commands North and West. ISAF is actively supporting its Afghan partners' efforts to accelerate reintegration, in an effort to make it an increasingly attractive alternative for insurgents. As at the end of January, the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme had formally reintegrated a total of 3,028 insurgents. This represents an increase of around 300 reintegrated persons over the previous quarter.

Development

34. As the link between security, governance and development, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan will gradually change focus from direct delivery of services to technical assistance and capacity-building, including improvement of Afghan national and subnational governance institution linkages. Provincial Reconstruction Teams will hand over their functions to either the Afghan local administrations, the private sector or other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, national consulates and aid agencies. The evolution of the Teams will lead to an ultimate dissolution scheduled by the end of 2014. The office of the NATO senior civilian representative, the lead for Provincial Reconstruction Team evolution, and ISAF headquarters have produced and disseminated assistance documents and guidance, a Provincial Reconstruction Team Evolution Planning Toolkit and "Guidance to JANIB transition plans" to help troop-contributing countries to identify Provincial Reconstruction Team evolution dependencies and how to hand off activities. As part of transition implementation plans, evolution plans for tranches 1 and 2 were approved by JANIB and their preparation for the remaining provinces is ongoing.

Children affected by armed conflict

35. The North Atlantic Council met on 22 February 2012 with its ISAF partners to discuss the issue of children affected by armed conflict and the ongoing cooperation between NATO and the United Nations on this issue. The Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, shared her views via videoconference. The North Atlantic Council agreed on a series of additional concrete and practical steps to be taken, including the development of guidelines for strategic commanders and a review of the NATO policy on contractor support to operations to ensure that NATO does not do business with contractors using child labour. Specific reporting on children affected by armed conflict will be included in future NATO quarterly reports to the United Nations on ISAF operations. NATO also appointed a high-level focal point on children affected by armed conflict to further interact with the United Nations on this topic.